



Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Study
Lewiston, Maine

Summary Report

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Lewiston Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Study

Summary Report

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I. Introduction

Richardson & Associates conducted an analysis of the existing streetscape patterns of the Lewiston downtown area and its surrounding neighborhoods. The study's purpose is to recommend ways in which the City's future streetscape environment could be enhanced, building upon improvements the City has made in recent years, to increase the overall visual and functional qualities of downtown Lewiston so it can be recognized as a coherent and vibrant whole. The City simultaneously developed an annotated, photographic inventory of all streets within the study area, identifying the materials and condition of various streetscape elements accompanying this document. (This document is on file with the City.)

The importance of efficient and attractive streets in a city cannot be overstated. Streets are the conduits that all citizens and visitors pass through to get from one place to another within the city and often constitute the greatest amount of municipally-owned land. They present one of the best opportunities to emphasize the character and identity of the city, and to project an image of community pride and economic vitality. In short, streets have value in the ceremonial, social and political sense—not just the practical.

The unity of the streets within a city is very important to the legibility of the streetscape. This is not to say that all streets should be identical—quite the contrary. Streets need to differ, for the functional and social needs of one street are different from another. Regardless of the number or type of elements associated with particular streets, it is of great importance that a high level of quality and consistency of elements throughout the downtown be maintained.

Of course, great streets cannot be expected to single-handedly bear the burden of making a legible city. Nor can good design necessarily ensure a successful and vibrant street life. Quality building stock, excellent architecture, community participation, municipal upkeep, and a reason to use the street all contribute to its success.

The goal of the study is to develop recommendations that will serve as a guide for future improvements being considered for the City of Lewiston's street environment. This begins with an understanding of the existing condition of the streetscape and an understanding of the character of recent improvement projects undertaken by the City. The recommendations that follow place future improvements within the larger context of the City and take into account the changes that have already been made.

It is hoped that this study will begin to identify ways that the City of Lewiston can improve on the legibility, function, and aesthetic appeal of its streetscape and build on the improvements that have been completed in recent years.

II. A Glossary of Streetscape Terms

The following terms are used within this summary report.

Accent pavement: The use of a paving material of higher visibility (and often higher quality) in order to attract attention to a particular area or *path*. Accent paving materials may include brick and concrete unit pavers, granite cobble, bluestone or integrally-colored concrete (alone or in combination) and may employ the use of decorative pattern.

Bench: A long seat for two or more persons. Benches, when placed appropriately, permit and encourage rest, conversation, and passing of the time. When used, they contribute to the sense of community.¹

Corridor/Path: The channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. People observe the city while moving through it, and along these paths the other environmental elements are arranged and related.² The term “corridor” is used interchangeably when describing major routes of travel.

Definition: Boundaries, usually walls of some sort (or sometimes *street trees*), that communicate clearly where the edges of the street are and that make the street a place. A building height (sidewalk to bottom of eave) to street width (building face to opposing building face) ratio is often employed to measure definition. Some field research suggests that buildings along streets are likely to provide a sense of definition when the height : width ratio is no smaller than 1:4. At a ratio of 1:5 and beyond there is generally not a sense of the street being defined.³ Streets that are well-defined are often referred to as having the feeling of an “outdoor room.”

Gateway: Taken literally, a gateway is something that serves as an entrance or a means of access. In streetscape terms, it is often a place of transition (between districts or at the entrance to the city or to the downtown) where the typical streetscape treatment is intensified in order to heighten the sense of entry.

Legibility: The ease with which the parts of the cityscape can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern.⁴

¹ Jacobs, Allan B. *Great Streets*, p. 300.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 277-280.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

Node: Points that are the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling. Nodes are often the core of a district.⁵

Public art: An artwork or art place that is created by an artist or designer, a group of artists and/or designers, or a collaboration between artists and/or designers for a specific public site or place for the public to experience.

Street light: A light, usually mounted on a post or pole, whose function is to provide light for the safe nighttime travelling of motorists and/or pedestrians. Street lights that are no taller than 20 feet, regularly spaced, also form lines that the eye grasps and follows and which thereby emphasize the linear quality of the street.⁶ If consistent or related in style, street lights can be a unifying element within a district or a city.

Street tree: A tree that is planted in close proximity to the edge of the street. Street trees can function to provide separation between vehicles and pedestrians (or vehicles and vehicles when planted in a boulevard), filter sunlight, screen buildings, and provide oxygen.

Zones: Sections of the city that the observer mentally enters “inside of,” and which are recognizable as having some common, identifying character.⁷

⁵ Ibid, p. 47.

⁶ Jacobs, p. 299.

⁷ Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, p. 47.

III. Analysis

Study Area

The study area is approximately 800 acres and includes the area of the downtown studied in the 1999 Downtown Master Plan. Boundaries of the study area are: the Androscoggin River north to the crossing of the Central Maine Railroad, following the railroad north to Riverside Street, Riverside Street east to Main Street, Main Street north to Mountain Avenue, Mountain Avenue to College Street, College Street to Campus Avenue, Campus Avenue to Sylvan Avenue (via Sabattus Street), Sylvan Avenue to Caron Street, Caron Street to Birch Street, Birch Street to Bartlett Street, Bartlett Street to Willow Street, Willow Street to Lisbon (to Canal) Street, Canal Street to Locust Street to the Androscoggin River (*figure 1*).

The decision on what to include within the study area was largely based on a desire to study only those areas of the City in close proximity to the urban core, where development is relatively dense and multi-modal circulation is expected. Certain geographic and cultural features, such as Franklin Pasture, the Androscoggin River, the Maine Central Railroad line, and Bates College seemed to be logical boundaries.

Zones

The study area encompasses the entire central business district of the City as well as the historic mill district, both city hospitals, a portion of Bates College, and several residential neighborhoods. For the purposes of this study we have identified zones that share distinct, common physical and use characteristics (*figure 2*):

- ***Civic Core***
- ***Historic Mill***
- ***Hospital / Municipal / Campus***
- ***Residential***
- ***Industrial***



The ***Civic Core*** is the central business district of the City, which includes many office buildings, retail stores, restaurants, and civic spaces. Development within this zone is very dense and includes a variety of architectural styles. It has one of the highest concentrations of historic buildings of any area of the city, and contains the city's only two official historic districts.



The **Historic Mill** zone is generally situated in the vicinity of the canal system and along the Androscoggin River. Mills included within this district are the Bates Mill, Androscoggin Mill, Hill Manufacturing Company, and Continental Mill. Several of the mills are undergoing an adaptive reuse transformation, from industrial mill to office park. The character of this area is in a state of change due to this transformation, and to the adjunct needs for additional parking areas and other support services.



There are two **Hospital/Municipal/Campus** zones identified in the study area. The smaller of the two is located in the vicinity of Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC). The other encompasses the portion of Bates College along College Street and Campus Avenue, as well as St. Mary's Hospital, the Armory, and Lewiston Middle School. This zone is characterized by educational and health care institutions that are large enough on their own, or in combination with adjacent similar institutions, to have a campus character.



The **Residential** zones, in aggregate, constitute the majority of the study area. The housing within the study area is high to medium density, and the building stock seems to range from the mid-to-late 19th Century to the mid-to-late 20th Century. The quality of housing stock varies from neighborhood to neighborhood.

A small portion of the study area falls into an **Industrial** zone. This is the area just southwest of CMMC, northeast of Heritage Park, adjacent to the railroad. Because of this area's character and the likelihood that it will not be a destination for the average citizen or visitor, we have not included recommendations for this zone.

In some instances the transition between zones is abrupt and obvious, as is the case between the civic core and the mills to the southwest. The transition is greatly aided by the physical presence of the canal separating the two. In other cases, there is much overlap—such as the

area around Bates College, where former residences have been converted to campus use. In truth, the function of a structure is less important to legibility of the zone as the outward physical similarity of it to adjacent structures.

Corridors

Circulatory corridors, in the form of streets, play an important role in increasing the legibility of the study area. In some cases they help to further delineate zones, in other cases they help to knit together zones, and in special cases create small “strip zones” within a larger zone.

Different corridor types can be categorized by the relative volume (and speed) of vehicular traffic present on the street. These factors affect such design variables as road width, degree of traffic signalization, degree of vehicle/pedestrian circulation, and level of lighting. For the purposes of this study we have developed three categories of circulation corridor: primary, secondary and tertiary (*figure 3*).



Primary corridors are those that have the greatest volume of vehicular traffic, connecting cities and towns and leading to highways and other “super” corridors. Primary corridors within the study area are Main Street, Sabbattus Street, Webster Avenue, College Street, Lincoln Street, Lisbon Street, and Canal Street. These are streets that are heavily used by vehicular traffic, and in some cases are also well used by pedestrians.

Main Street is an example of a corridor that tends to divide rather than knit together. For example, at the northern tip of Main Street within the study area, the residential neighborhood to the northeast of Main Street is very much associated with Bates College and contains a number of fairly grand, single-family homes. The neighborhood on the opposite side of Main Street, in contrast, has much smaller lots with very modest residential units that are not as well maintained.



Secondary corridors are those streets that are less traveled than primary corridors, but are often used to link between primary routes and have a moderate volume of traffic. These would include Park Street, Chestnut Street, Pine Street, Ash Street, Cedar Street, Bartlett Street, and Central Avenue.



Tertiary corridors, or local streets, act largely as neighborhood streets in residential areas, and as connectors to more heavily trafficked streets. These are generally narrower streets with more balanced activity between vehicles and pedestrians.

Streetscape Inventory

In conjunction with this study, the City of Lewiston conducted an inventory of streets within the study area. For each street segment, curb type, sidewalk type, utility and light pole type, and lamp style were identified as well as each element's condition (if notable). Street furnishings, if present, were also identified by style. The degree to which sidewalks are ADA compliant was also assessed, and representative photographs of each street segment were taken. This inventory is located in the Department of Public Services.

The goal of the streetscape inventory is to have an up-to-date assessment of the appearance and condition of the sidewalk and street furnishings at all locations within the downtown. This assessment will allow the City and/or future consultants the ability to evaluate the patterns and conditions that exist, and to plan strategies for future streetscape improvements. The City should update the inventory on a regular basis as a way to keep current with the progress of implementation on a downtown-wide basis.



The inventory indicates that most streets within the study area have bituminous (asphalt) sidewalks with granite curbing and street lighting mounted on utility poles. Utility poles are made of either aluminum or wood, and light fixtures are predominantly either "Cobra" style lights or the Holophane RSL-200 series lights. Both are fairly utilitarian in appearance, but are so familiar and universally used in this region that they tend to blend in with the utility lines.



Some streets close to the civic core have sidewalk materials other than bituminous—most commonly brick and concrete unit pavers. Benches and trash receptacles are also prevalent in the civic core, especially along Lisbon Street. The City is gradually implementing a decorative streetlight program within the civic core, replacing or supplementing existing streetlights with the historically-styled Granville/Washington Postlite series by Holophane. For a time, the City was installing decorative streetlights from the Holophane Prismsphere series, which featured a globe luminaire. It is our understanding that these fixtures are gradually being phased out and replaced with the Granville series.

The focus of the most noticeable streetscape improvement efforts to date has been within the civic core zone (*figure 4*) and along primary corridors. At the time of this report, streets recently or currently improved include Lincoln Street, Lisbon Street, Canal Street and Pine Street. Some improvements are selective, as was the case with Lisbon Street, where only the lighting and benches have been modified. Others are comprehensive—such as at Lincoln Street—including new paving, plantings, lighting, and furnishings.

High Street, which flanks Maine Medical Center, is currently undergoing a transformation. New signage, curbs, sidewalks, planting areas, and decorative lighting are being installed. While different in character from those improvements being made elsewhere in the downtown, they are of high quality and appropriate for the hospital campus.

The City of Lewiston is to be commended for recent beautification efforts. These improvements are beginning to establish a framework of unity within the downtown core, communicating Lewiston's pride in, and commitment to, its streets.

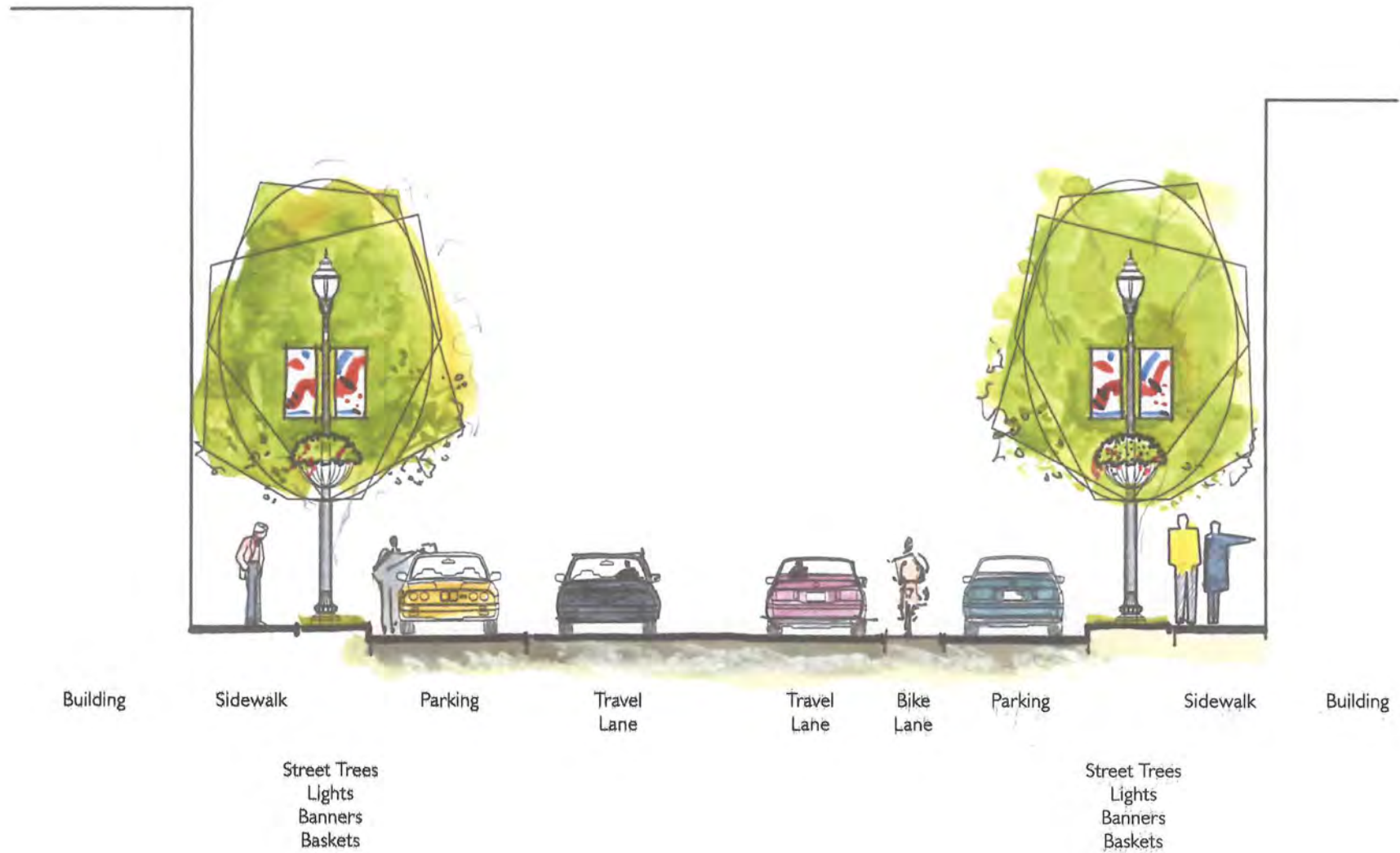
IV. Goals / Recommendations

The following are goals, followed by recommendations, for each zone and circulation corridor within the study area. These zone/corridor guidelines are meant to be used in combination with one another, as the goals for each street should be tailored to the nature of the street itself (i.e., the corridor type) as well as the relative character of the area in which the street exists (i.e., the zone). *Figures 2 and 3* should be referred to when considering the recommendations.

Zones

Civic Core

- Maximize the ease and comfort with which pedestrians navigate within the downtown civic core.
 - Civic core streets should have street trees spaced at consistent intervals. Street trees should include varieties that provide shade but that do not block the view from one side of the street to the other (i.e., deciduous canopy trees). Damaged or dead trees should be removed and empty tree pits given replacement trees. Tree species selected should be salt-and pollution-tolerant and disease-resistant.
 - Attractive and clean waste receptacles should be provided at visible locations (at least one per block).
 - Street light style should be consistent and be of a height that is oriented to the pedestrian scale. Continue use of the Holophane Granville/Washington Postlite styles, with single and double luminaires.
- Provide places for rest, recreation and social interaction.
 - Incorporate seating at regular intervals, preferably where the location has a good probability for use (i.e., bus stop, library entrance, café, parks, plazas).
 - Investigate additional sites for pocket parks and green spaces for landscaping. Good strides have already been made in this area at the Courthouse and near the Park Street/Main Street intersection.
 - Program activities for pocket parks that will attract gatherings at certain times of the day. Some examples include free lunchtime or early evening concerts, start/finish areas for weekend road races or walk-a-thons, outdoor heritage festivals, etc.
 - Improve the function and aesthetics of existing open spaces so that they are inviting places for rest, recreation and social interaction.
 - Use high quality materials for longevity and low maintenance.
- Reduce the impact of the automobile.
 - Plant canopy trees on both sides of the roadway that will arch over the road. This will help to reduce the scale of the street and to provide a layer of separation between the vehicular and pedestrian zones.

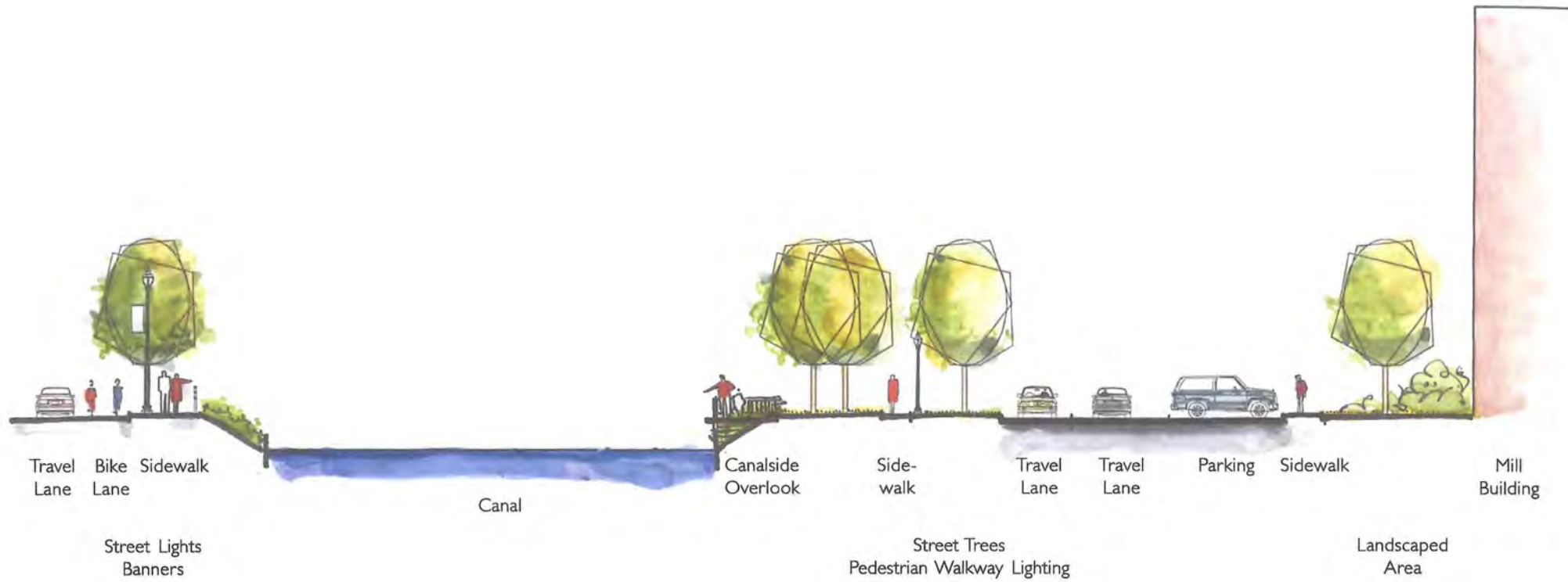


CIVIC CORE PRIMARY CORRIDOR

- Make street widths as narrow as feasible to discourage fast moving traffic.
- Promote sidewalk activities that shift the scale of the street, to welcome people on foot and to divert attention from vehicular traffic. Some examples are information kiosks, street performers, public art, sidewalk vendors, and attractive and engaging storefronts.
- Provide safe and convenient access and parking for bicycles.
 - Incorporate dedicated bicycle lanes on major commuting routes.
 - Provide bicycle racks at places where they are likely to be used and where the likelihood for vandalism is low.
 - Enforce regulations prohibiting bicycles and skateboards on sidewalks.
- Employ the highest quality materials and design possible, in order to strengthen the identity of this district as the heart and soul of Lewiston.
 - Consider the use of specialty paving treatments using materials indigenous to Lewiston such as brick and granite.
 - Implement a banner program for all major streets within the district. Consider custom banners, which are specifically designed to highlight the unique qualities of the City.
 - Consider hanging baskets if maintenance of the plants can be ensured.
 - Consider permanent-material crosswalks at prominent intersections within the civic core, to increase visibility of the crossing area and to add another layer of visual interest to the streetscape.
 - Consider site-generated public art within parks and highly visible public spaces.

Mill Redevelopment

- Provide an adequate quantity of safe and comfortable pedestrian access from the civic core area.
 - Make sidewalk/streetscape improvements to strategic lateral (east-west) connector streets to increase the legibility of the pedestrian connection between the two zones.
 - Incorporate pedestrian-scale lighting along these connector routes to reinforce their visibility at all hours of the day.
 - Increase the safety of crossing major streets by installing highly visible crosswalks and automated crossing signals.
- Provide safe and convenient access and parking for bicycles.
 - Incorporate dedicated bicycle lanes on major commuting routes.
 - Provide bicycle racks at places where they are likely to be used and where the likelihood for vandalism is low.
 - Provide a wayfinding system on major roads to aid bicycle navigation.

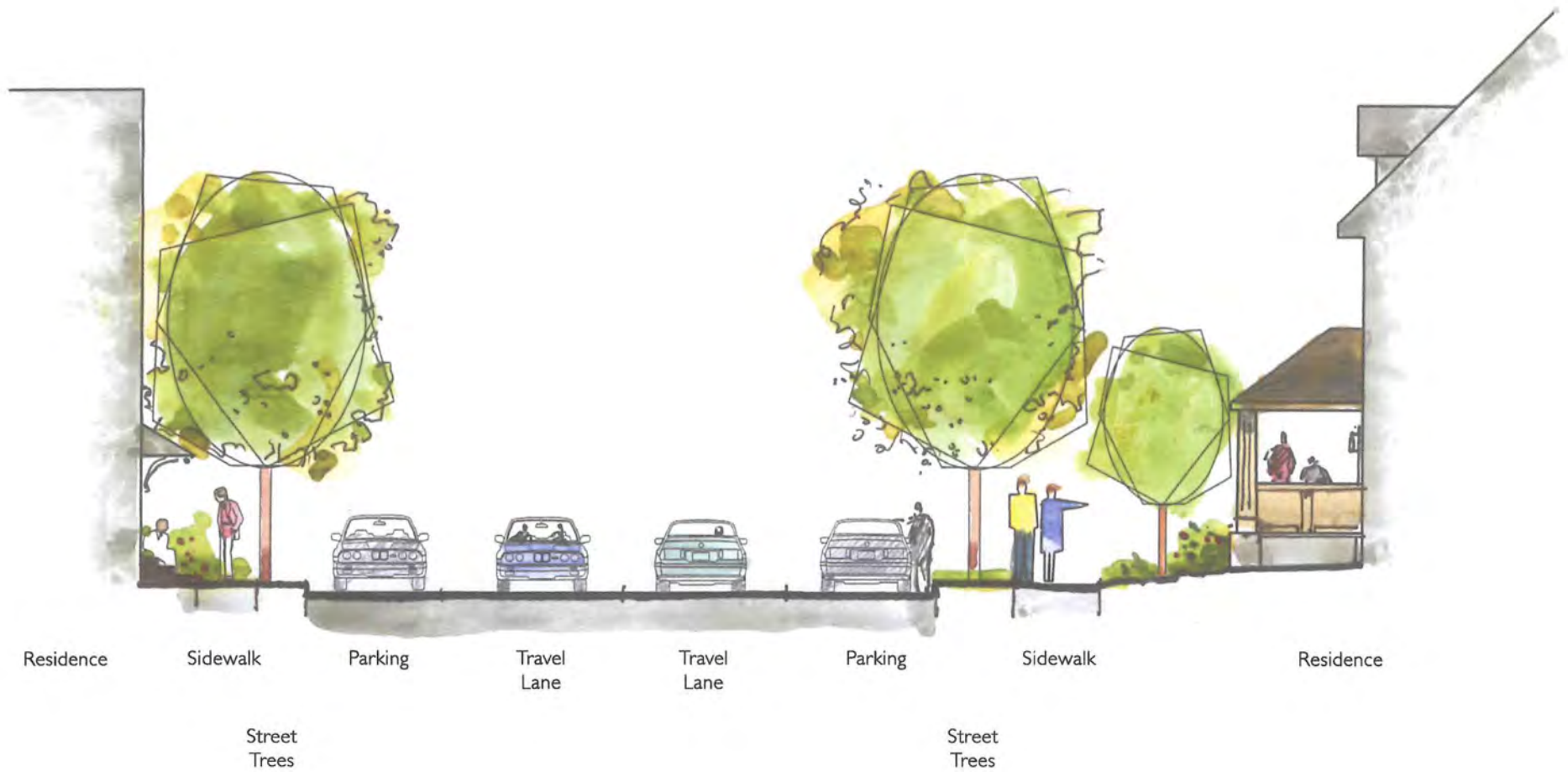


CANAL-SIDE IN MILL REDEVELOPMENT ZONE

- Provide opportunities for recreation and tourism in the vicinity of the historic mills.
 - Create attractive and functional recreational paths centered around the City's unique canal system that would attract tourists and residents alike.
- Envision a streetscape whose scale works to moderate the mass of the large buildings.
 - Street trees, public art and lighting can all function to enhance the presence of these significant structures and make the pedestrian environment more comfortable.

Hospital / Campus / Municipal

- Maximize the ease and comfort with which pedestrians navigate within this area.
 - Provide safe crossing points between parking lots or structures and major building entrance points.
 - When the buildings or open spaces are public, create a signage system that clearly identifies the identity of the building or open space.
 - Develop or establish logical links to the civic core.
- Provide places for rest, recreation and social interaction.
 - Provide seating where it makes sense that it will get used (i.e., near entrances to buildings, adjacent to playground areas, adjacent to street crossings).
- Reduce the impact of the automobile.
 - Ensure that all streets in this zone have curbed sidewalks and that the sidewalks are wide enough to allow the planting of street trees. Where sidewalks exist and are too narrow for street trees, plant street trees on the non-street side of the sidewalk, where possible. (Consider public/private partnerships as a means of achieving this.)
 - Make street widths as narrow as feasible to discourage fast moving traffic.
 - Plant street trees to reduce the scale of the street and to provide a layer of separation between the vehicular and pedestrian zones.
- Provide safe and convenient access and parking for bicycles.
 - Incorporate dedicated bicycle lanes on major commuting routes.
 - Provide bicycle racks at places where they are likely to be used and where the likelihood for vandalism is low.



RESIDENTIAL

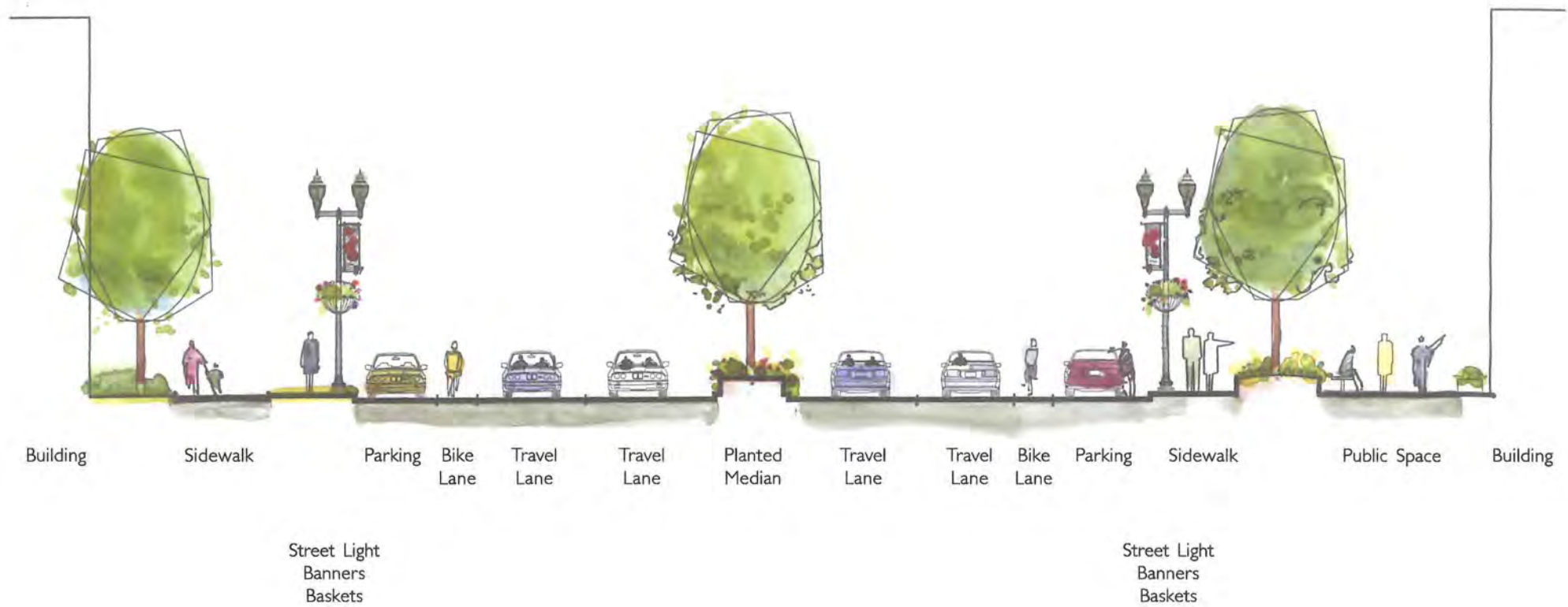
Residential

- Create the opportunity for safe and enjoyable pedestrian travel within each neighborhood and between neighborhoods.
 - Ensure that all streets in this zone have curbed sidewalks and that the sidewalks are wide enough to allow the planting of street trees between the sidewalk and curb. Where sidewalks exist and are too narrow for street trees, plant street trees on the non-street side of the sidewalk, within the public right-of-way where possible. Foster public/private partnerships to create the opportunity for homeowners to plant street trees on private land.
 - Provide crosswalks at street intersections.
 - Consolidate curb cuts onto private properties to increase sidewalk legibility, increase the amount of on-street parking spaces and discourage parking in the front yard between the sidewalk and face of building.
 - Develop open space, recreation and play opportunities within each neighborhood so that one is always walking distance away.
 - Celebrate neighborhood areas with identifying signage to strengthen their identity.
- Work toward building definition of the streetscape.
 - Encourage infill development that is compatible with adjacent structures.
 - Plant street trees to reduce the scale of the street, increase privacy and provide a layer of separation between the vehicular and pedestrian zones. Require a minimum percentage of new parking lots that must be landscaped (preferably with street trees).
- Encourage measures that will slow vehicular speeds within residential neighborhoods.
 - Make street widths as narrow as feasible to discourage fast moving traffic.
 - Plant street trees (see above).
 - Allow parallel parking on both sides of the street.
 - Consider narrowing excessively wide streets when large-scale infrastructure projects are being planned.

Circulation Corridors

Primary Vehicular Route

- Reduce the visual impact and noise of automobiles without hindering their ability to navigate efficiently and safely.
 - Where street width allows, plant a raised median or boulevard to separate opposing traffic lanes.
 - All major streets should have street trees at the curb spaced at consistent intervals. Street trees should include varieties that provide shade but that do not



CIVIC CORE MAJOR ARTERIAL ROUTE

- block the view from one side of the street to the other (i.e., deciduous canopy trees). Damaged or dead trees should be removed and empty tree pits given replacement trees.
 - Increase the safety and efficiency of vehicular travel through a comprehensive way-finding system.
- Provide safe and comfortable pedestrian access along the route, enabling pedestrians to travel between neighborhoods and along the primary corridor.
 - Provide sidewalks on both sides of major streets, with street trees at consistent intervals, to reduce the scale of the street and provide separation between the vehicular and pedestrian zones.
 - Install light fixtures that work at both the vehicular and pedestrian scale, which will have the added benefit of increasing the legibility of the street.
 - Provide crosswalks at street intersections, using permanent materials for major intersections and gateways.
- Provide safe access for bicycles.
 - All major streets into and throughout the downtown should have dedicated bicycle lanes.
 - Incorporate bike route signage and maps into the City wayfinding system.
 - Develop a bicycle route map to encourage people to use this alternative method of moving into and within the City.

Secondary Vehicular Route

- Reduce the visual impact and noise of automobiles without hindering their ability to navigate efficiently and safely.
 - All secondary streets should have street trees at the curb spaced at consistent intervals. Street trees should include varieties that provide shade but that do not block the view from one side of the street to the other (i.e., deciduous canopy trees). Damaged or dead trees should be removed and empty tree pits given replacement trees.
- Provide safe and comfortable pedestrian access along the route, enabling pedestrians to travel between neighborhoods and to primary corridors.
 - Provide sidewalks on both sides of secondary streets, with street trees at consistent intervals.
 - Provide crosswalks at street intersections.
- Provide safe access for bicycles.
 - As secondary streets often act as feeder streets or shortcut routes between residential and business areas, it is strongly recommended that secondary routes be furnished with a bike route on at least one side of the street.

Tertiary / Minor Vehicular Route

- Reduce the visual impact and noise of automobiles without hindering their ability to navigate efficiently and safely.
 - Allow parallel parking on both sides of the street.
 - Consider narrowing excessively wide streets when large-scale infrastructure projects are being planned.
- Provide safe and comfortable pedestrian access along the route, enabling pedestrians to travel between neighborhoods and to primary and secondary corridors.
 - Ensure that there is a sidewalk on at least one side of the street.
 - Consolidate curb cuts onto private properties to increase sidewalk legibility, increase the amount of on-street parking spaces and discourage parking in the front yard between the sidewalk and face of building.
 - Provide crosswalks at street intersections.

Nodes and Gateway Treatments

Nodes are strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which one is traveling. The key characteristic of a node is that it is a *point*, a relatively small area relative to a zone or district. The significance of the node is that it is typically where a confluence of circulation happens (a major intersection) or where a landmark occurs. It is most often a very familiar spot in a city or town.

When a node is situated in a location where there is a transition from one zone or district to another, this is typically an appropriate place to establish a gateway treatment. A gateway treatment happens when the typical streetscape treatment along a corridor is intensified in order to heighten the sense of entry.

Several nodes and gateway opportunities are highlighted on *figure 3*. These are special places where the City might consider increasing the visibility of the area or creating a gateway.

Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Study

Lewiston, Maine

January 2004

0' 400' 800' 1600'



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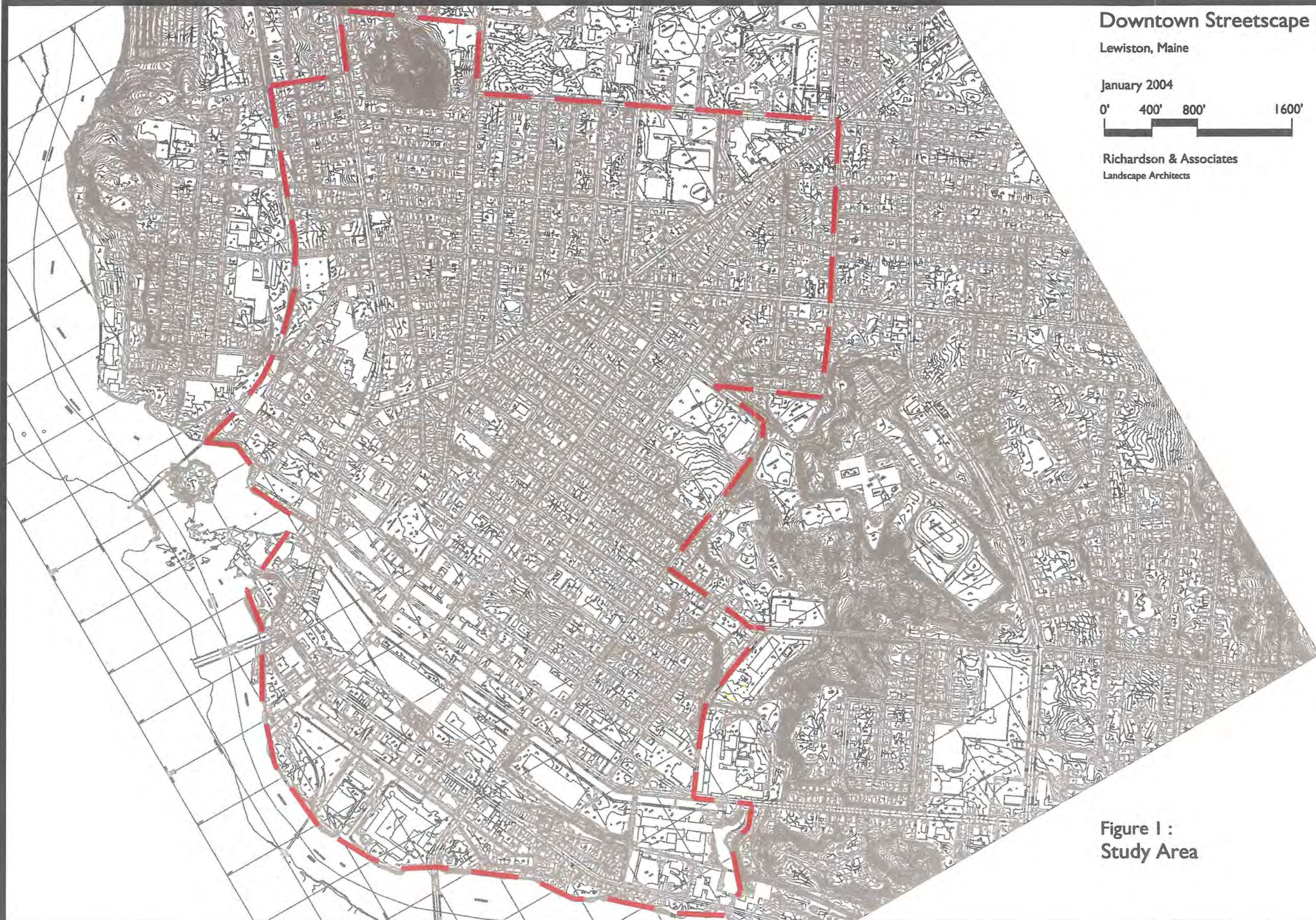


Figure I :
Study Area

Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Study

Lewiston, Maine

January 2004



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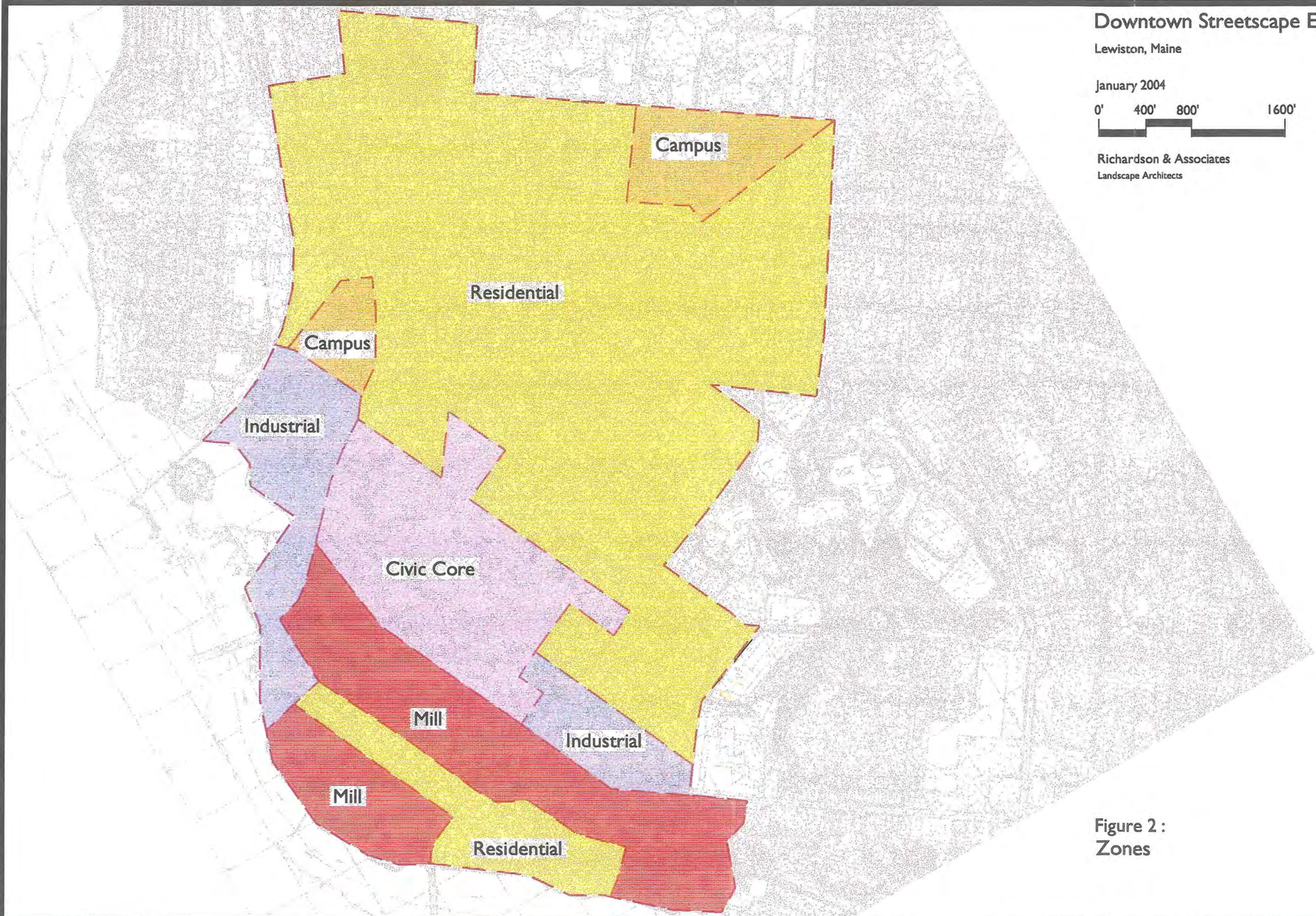
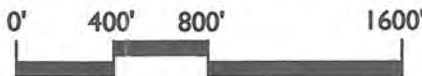


Figure 2 :
Zones

Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Study

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Legend

- Primary Route
- Secondary Route
- Tertiary Route
- Local Street
- Zone Boundary
- Node

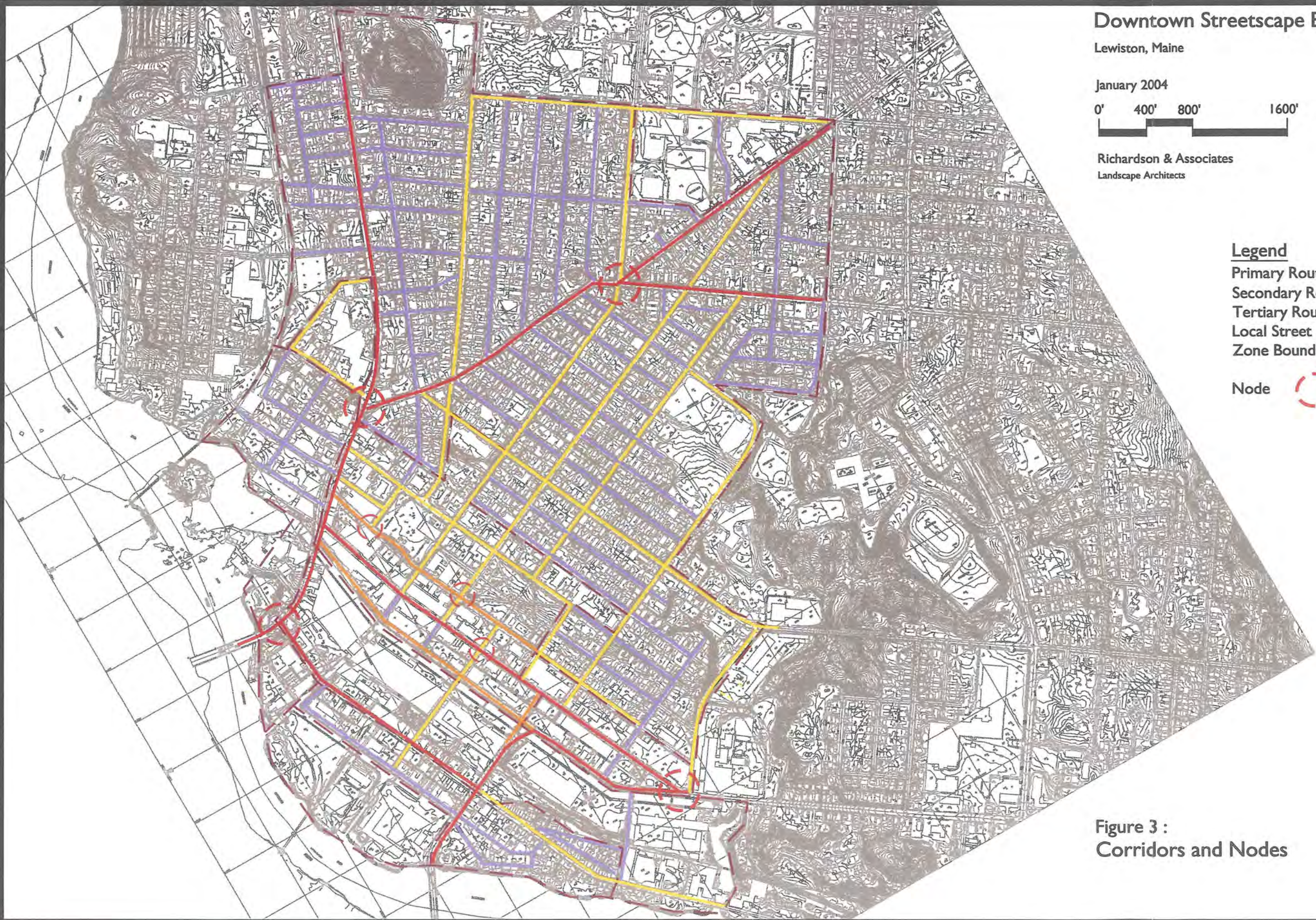


Figure 3 :
Corridors and Nodes

Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Study

Lewiston, Maine

January 2004

0' 400' 800' 1600'



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Legend

- Recent Improvement
- Pending Improvement
- Study Area

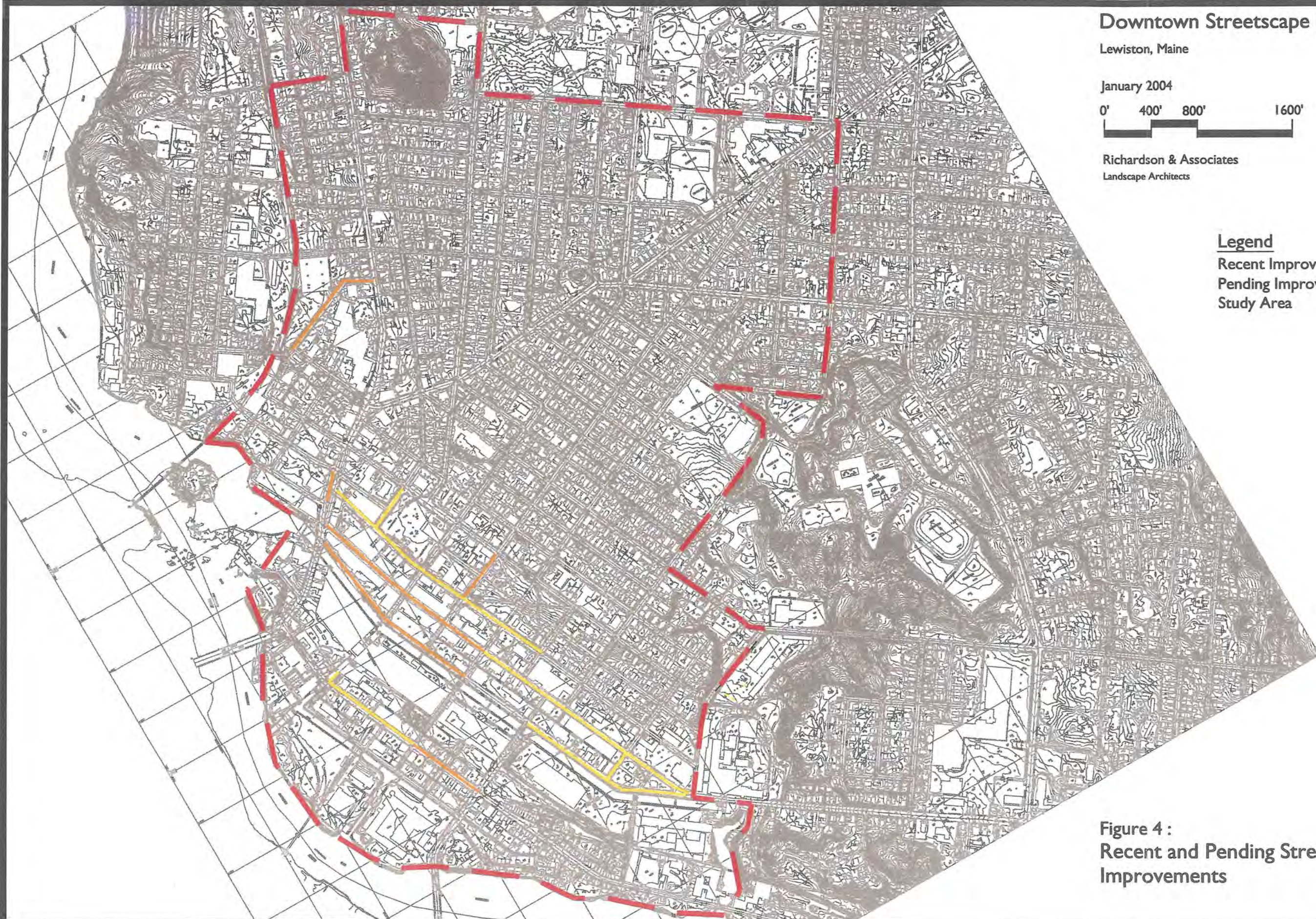


Figure 4 :
Recent and Pending Streetscape
Improvements